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Rep. Peter Welch, D-Vt., toured green energy businesses in Burlington and Richford on Friday and called for the passage of legislation he has sponsored to bolster Vermont's growing renewable energy and energy efficiency industries.

Speaking at Draker Labs on Burlington's North Street, Welch outlined his support for three bills, which together would eliminate subsidies for big oil companies, expand tax incentives for renewable energy businesses and launch an energy efficiency revolution.

"The environmental and economic tragedy in the Gulf of Mexico is just the latest reminder that our nation's energy policy is broken," Welch said in a news release. "At the same time that oil spews into the Gulf, China and India are taking the lead in creating green jobs, American families are spending too much on their energy bills, and our national security is being compromised.

"Diverting oil subsidies to clean energy industries will create quality jobs throughout the country. As a leader in the clean energy economy, Vermont is well-positioned to take advantage of a 21st century energy policy."

Welch's remarks came during the start of what he intends to be a summer-long, clean energy tour. In addition to Draker Labs, which produces diagnostic and analytic systems for solar and wind installations, Welch on Friday visited Kaytec, Inc., a Richford-based manufacturer of insulated vinyl siding.

Welch called on Congress to pass three bills:

- The Home Star Energy Retrofit Act (H.R. 5019) would create 170,000 jobs in manufacturing, construction and retail; save homeowners \$10 billion on their energy bills over 10 years; and reduce harmful carbon emissions. Written by Welch, the Home Star bill passed the House in

May and is beginning to move in the Senate.

- The Renewable Energy Expansion Act (H.R. 4599) would extend key tax incentives for renewable energy sources -- including solar, wind, biomass and geothermal -- for two years. Originally created by the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, these tax incentives, which are due to expire at the end of this year, have helped the renewable energy sector during the ongoing economic downturn.

- The End Big Oil Subsidies Act (H.R. 5644) would eliminate \$35 billion in tax breaks for the oil industry. In 2007, the top five oil companies made more than \$123 billion in profits, while accepting billions in taxpayer handouts. H.R. 5644 was introduced in the House after top oil executives testified in front of the Energy and Commerce Committee, on which Welch serves.

Welch's clean energy tour will continue during the August congressional recess.